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Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin' - The Psycho(a)logical Mythosology of the Written Word

Patrick Jemmer

This article continues our tour through the logo-myths of language [1],[2],[3],[4], seeking Psycho-chaotic Semiotic insights [5] by applying the ideas of Derrida and Lacan to binary oppositions in written language and by deconstructing-reconstructing the story of the Writing on the Wall. We seek to emphasize the importance in these stories of the undecidable, supplementary trace, and the psychological reconciliation of opposites, and their almost "magical" influence [5] on the unconscious striving for creativity and individuation of the human personality-in-language.

In fact, we find that the teeth of the "language trap" tighten when we move from spoken language and move to the invention of writing, and it is natural to ask "What is it about the written word? What makes it so powerful?" [6]. As an example we note that "Moses did not come back down from Mount Sinai having had a five-minute chat with the Supreme Being. No. Apparently, he spent a couple of days up there while the Almighty himself wrote the commandments down on two tablets of stone. Presumably, the fact that these imprecations were personally carved all the way through the stone (leaving miraculous, unattached floaty bits in the middle of certain letters, we're told) and were thus legible from both sides, rendered these rules non-negotiable" [6]. And in fact "From the earliest cave paintings, through clay tablets, papyrus sheets, hieroglyphs etched on pyramid walls, stretched goat skin, to modern pulp paper, the written word has always had a sense of ... permanent importance ... about it" [6]. More than that we realize that "The written marks are abandoned, cut off from the writer, yet they continue to produce effects beyond his presence and beyond the present actuality of his meaning, i.e., beyond his life itself" [7]

and that "To write is to produce a mark which will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive ... The writer's disappearance will not prevent it functioning" [7]. This is because "... the letters have a kind of genius - a genius for showing the sounds of speech ... They can be arranged in endless combinations as necessary ... There were about 27 recurring shapes: a fish, a snake, a human stick figure with arms out, a wavy line, the head of an ox or cow, ..." [8]. Now "Language at this juncture becomes the representation of representation, in hieroglyphic and ideographic writing and then in phonetic-alphabetic writing. The progress of symbolization, from the symbolizing of words, to that of syllables, and finally to letters in an alphabet, imposed an increasingly irresistible sense of order and control. And in the reification that writing permits, language is no longer tied to a speaking subject or community of discourse, but creates an autonomous field from which every subject can be absent" [9]. For "All writing, in order to be what it is, must be able to function in the radical absence of every empirically determined addressee in general ... This is not a modification of presence, but a break in it, a 'death' or the possibility of a 'death' of the addressee" [7]. Moreover, "To sign into a signature is in a way to loosen the moorings of self-preservation; it is to unsheath the canon of one's ungainliness (French gain 'sheath'), one's nakedness, one's mortality - a mo{NUMen}tal exposure. The monument is simply death remembered; nothing of 'monumental' import" [10]. These motifs have always suggested esoteric readings and, "Since the 19th century, a few thinkers have held the letters' shapes to be the subconscious expressions of a collective human mind ... the shapes evolved over centuries due to guiding human principles rather

than to mere convenience in scribbling" [8]. Kallir interpreted the alphabet as a sexual picture code, a "magic chain of procreative symbols destined to safeguard the survival of the race" of humankind [11]. In this mythology of meaning "The shape of A, for example, sticking into the air and associated historically with the ox's horns, is a cinch to symbolize the erect male member. The curve of D is the full womb of a pregnant lady. And G turns out to be a most explicit letter, showing the act itself, with a female circle and male crossbar" [8].

And the very characters themselves, binding the creative essence of "the Word" were held to harness a supernatural power: "At a still higher level, philosophies of writing have attributed certain sacred qualities to the written signs, even claiming spiritual experience through the ritualistic practice of writing. By taking the art of calligraphy to the sublime heights of meditation through the symbolic representation of deities in the form of letters (seed-syllables), written signs not only served to help acquire a knowledge base of the physical world around the human being, but also played an important role in their spiritual and metaphysical needs" [12]. Now the philosopher "Austin conjectures a kind of agony of language that must be kept firmly at a distance, or from which one must resolutely turn away. His argument suggests a risk surrounding language like a ditch, into which it might fall; a place of external perdition into which language might never venture. That is might avoid by remaining at home. ... The ditch? Writing ..." [7]. However, by contrast, "What Austin expels are aberrant, Derrida takes as the standard case. And this is found in writing. ... Writing operates on absences. It can be cut free from its sender and its addressee. In their absence a third party can decipher it, identify its marks, and use it" [7]. The mechanism by which "Letterforms essentially aided communication with the unknown [was] via the primal energy behind their worldly

manifestations" [12]. In Tibetan philosophy, " ... the written seed character (letter) is as potent as a spoken one. The most favoured and potent of all mantra - om mani padme hum, which in essence represents the breakthrough (om) of seeing the absolute (mani, jewel) in the relative (padme, lotus) ... beyond time, space and individuality (hum). This mantra of liberation is written on rocks, flags, and prayerwheels and is regarded as the epitome of Buddhist teachings" [12]. Furthermore, consider "The All Powerful Ten," the mantra of K_lacakra (one of the main Tantric deities of Vajrayana Buddhism [13]) "consisting of ten syllables om, ha, k-sa, ma, la, va, ra, ya-m and composed in the unique integrated fashion, [which] is another sacred manifestation of letterforms of the highest order" [12]. The Vimalaprabh_ describes the symbolism of "The Ten" - "From the vajra-k_ya, described as ten existences, body, awareness, space, wind, fire, water, earth, stable, moving, and the gods unseen and uncreated, originate the site of creation of mantras, and Lord of Men, there again are released. In this way one who understands this properly is not a beast and their mind is free from conceptualisation" [13]. Here " ... the vajra-k_ya, the pure aspect of the body, is described in terms of ten aspects of existence, and that these are essentially (associated with) the sites of articulation of different sounds" [13]. This mantra is so highly regarded that "In fact the written word, calligraphically written or wood-block printed, still commands maximum respect in Tibetan faith today" [12]. In contrast, there are examples where the written script alone is sufficient for meditation: "Perhaps Siddham (a variant of northern Brahmi from 5th / 6th Century AD India) is the only script in which letterforms have been solely used for meditative purposes, through the visual symbolism of ritualistically written seed-syllables, as a part of the practice of ... esoteric Buddhism in China and Japan" [12]. The Founder of Shingon Japanese Esoteric Buddhism "Kukai helped to elucidate

what mantra is in a way that had not been done before: he addresses the fundamental questions of what a text is, how signs function, and above all, what language is. In this he covers some of the same ground as modern day structuralists and other scholars of language, although he comes to very different conclusions" [14]. In fact, "... rather than being devoid of meaning, Kukai suggests that dharanis [like mantras] are in fact saturated with meaning - every syllable is symbolic on multiple levels. One of Kukai's distinctive contributions was to take this symbolic association even further by saying that there is no essential difference between the syllables of mantras and sacred texts, and those of ordinary language" [14]. We find that "In this system of thought all sounds are said to originate from 'a' - which is the short sound in father. For esoteric Buddhism 'a' has a special function because it is associated with Shunyata or the idea that nothing exists in its own right, but is contingent upon causes and conditions. In Sanskrit 'a' is a prefix which changes the meaning of a word into its opposite, so 'vidya' is understanding, and 'avidya' is ignorance (the same arrangement is also found in many Greek words, like example, 'atheism' vs. 'theism' and 'apathy' vs. 'pathos')" [14]. In this practice, "'A', the seed character of Mahavairocana [Great Shining One] (Dainichi Nyorai [Great Sun Buddha]) is the most important Siddham (meaning of the perfect) character. One look at the letter a, destroys evil passion; the efficacy of the mantra transforms this body into Buddha. For the purpose of meditation, the character is drawn large in either formal or soft style on a scroll and hung on a wall. Sitting in front of this letter and meditating, in the process of enlightenment the distinction between worshipper and worshipped is effaced for the meditator" [12]. In Vedic Hinduism we encounter the Yantra, meaning "instrument". In terms of these practices, "A Yantra is a geometric design acting as a highly efficient tool for contemplation, concentration and meditation. Yantras carry spiritual

significance, and point the user to higher levels of consciousness" [15]. The way in which this is achieved is that "The Yantra provides a focal point that is a window into the absolute. When the mind is concentrated on a single, simple object (in this case a Yantra), the mental chatter ceases. Eventually, the object is dropped when the mind can remain empty and silent without help. In the most advanced phases, it is possible to attain union with God by the geometric visualization of a Yantra" [15]. In terms of its symbolic meaning "The Yantra is like a microcosmic picture of the macrocosm. It is a focusing point and an outer and inner doorway. The Yantras are often focused on a specific deity and so by tuning into the different Yantras you can tap into certain deities or creative force centers in the universe" [15], and in terms of construction, "Yantras are usually designed so that the eye is carried into the center, and very often they are symmetrical. They can be drawn on paper, wood, metal, or earth, or they can be three-dimensional" [15].

Let us now turn our attention to the hieroglyphics of Ancient Egypt where "Belief in the magical efficacy of the 'divine words' found ... expression in the attempts that were occasionally made to limit the power of certain hieroglyphs, especially those depicting humans, birds and animals" [16]. The reason for this is that "These were deemed to have considerable potential for harm when located in magically 'sensitive' areas, like the walls of a burial chamber or the sides of a sarcophagus" [16]. In fact, "The fear was that they might assume an independent hostile life of their own and consume the food offerings intended for the deceased or even attack the dead body itself" [16]. These dangers had to be resisted, and "Steps were therefore taken to neutralise the danger that they posed. Sometimes such hieroglyphs were simply suppressed and replaced by anodyne substitutes. On other occasions they were modified in some way to immobilise them" [16]. How might this be accomplished? Well, "The bodies of human figures and the heads of

insects and snakes were omitted, the bodies of birds truncated, the bodies of certain animals severed in two, and the tails of snakes abbreviated" [16]. In exceptional cases, "Particularly dangerous creatures, such as the evil serpent, called Apophis, the great enemy of the sun-god R_PcP, were sometimes shown as constrained or 'killed' by knives or spears" [16]. On the other hand, some " ... hieroglyphs were regarded as having beneficial properties and were rendered in three dimensions to serve as amulets or charms. When worn on the body these amulets were believed to confer 'good luck' on their owners, whether living or dead" [16]. For example, "The amulet in the form of the sa-sign, meaning 'protection', was one of several that offered protection against the powers of evil; the so-called udjat-eye of the god Horus was another" [16]. Moreover, "The ankh- and the djed-signs offered the benefits of 'life' and 'endurance' respectively, while the hand, leg and face, and others like them, helped to restore the functions of the bodily parts after death" [16], and "The sign meaning 'horizon' shows the sun rising over a mountain. It allowed the deceased to witness and identify with the sun's daily rebirth and thereby be reborn himself" [16]. Furthermore, "As an integral part of a system of recreative art the hieroglyphs were naturally believed to have the power to bring to life what they depicted or stated. A funerary formula invoking benefits from a god was enough in itself, if it was written in hieroglyphs, to ensure the reception of those benefits by the deceased owner, as long as the owner was named ... " [16]. The reason for this was that "The name of a person, inscribed in hieroglyphs, was believed to embody the person's unique identity. If the representation of a person lacked a name, it lacked also the means to ensure his continued existence in the after-life. To destroy the name(s) of a person was to deprive him of his identity and render him non-existent" [16]. Of particular interest is the fact that "Even the gods were not immune from such attack. When King Akhenaten sought, in the late

Eighteenth Dynasty, to institute a new religion of the sun disk and abolish the old regime, he ordered, among other things, that the name of the existing chief of the gods, Amun, be removed from the monuments of the land, with effects that can still be seen on many surviving pieces" [16].

Now, as example of writing from a completely different cultural milieu we might consider the Germanic Runes, of which, as a best estimate, we have extant about 5000 inscriptions from maybe 40000 produced between AD 100 and AD 500 [17]. We are prompted to ask the question "Why were runes invented? What did Germanic peoples need them for?" [17], and maybe by comparison with the motivation and usage of the ritual hieroglyphic inscriptions, described above, the answer to this has proved contentious. We find that "Some scholars, whose views are now rather outdated, asserted that the social structure of the Germanic nations was so simple, their political and commercial life so limited, that they had no need of a script for keeping records, sending messages, asserting ownership, or doing other practical things. The human memory, working in an oral culture, was adequate" [17]. So on this argument, " ... the only use for such a script as runes was for religious, ritual or magical purposes" [17]. We find "Such an inscription as gutaniowihailag, with that significant last sequence 'holy', might seem to confirm this theory, and the monuments record several other letter groups that look equally significant" [17]. For example, "Some early objects have on them the group alu, others laukaR. These sequences, the first connected with protection and the second with fertility, have been read as magical words converting the objects they adorn into amulets" [17]. Even the name of the script was taken to add to this theory, for "Moreover, the etymology of the word 'rune' (Old English run which means 'secret, mystery' has been used to connect the script with the occult, with magic. From this type of evidence has developed the attitude that runes

were essentially, in origin at any rate, a magical or religious set of characters, that runic legends have, by virtue of their script, magical properties, and that rune-masters - the men who were trained to use the alphabet - had supernatural powers or were able to control or release such powers by their use of runes" [17]. This leads to the observation that "In the fiction of late mediaeval Scandinavia the employment of runes for magical formulæ became commonplace" [17]. And then again, there's a further mystery, which might be encapsulated by asking: "... why did the Anglo-Saxon literate trade in their runic writing for the continental spread?" [18]. We discover that one reason "... may be seen in the word rune itself: in Old English, the verb *r_nian* meant 'to whisper' (whence the archaic Modern English round [to whisper], and the noun *r_n* meant 'secret council.' ... If runes were a big secret, they were presumably of rather limited use to all but the initiated in their mysteries" [18]. We must contrast this with "... the Roman alphabet that the early Christian missionaries were happy enough to make accessible so that converts could read the Scriptures" [18]. However as a counter to all this mystery we find that "... the view of many scholars [is that] this general approach to runes is outdated and nonsensical. Most distinguished Scandinavian runologists now take the view that the Germanic peoples used runes as they would have done any other script (had they known any other), for practical, day-to-day purposes" [17]. Runes were not totally devoid of ritual significance, however, for "... if they wanted to cut a religious or magical text, if they wished to produce a charm word, they would use runic, the only script they had, for it, just as a modern wizard would be likely to write his magic gibberish in Roman characters" [17]. The conclusion of all this is, then, that despite their "magical" applications, we should "... not confer upon runes the status of a magical script" [17]. Even so, the "magical" interpretation persists, and "It is further possible that the transition to the Roman alphabet was hastened by the bad press

that Christians tended to give the pagan philosophy implicit in the runes themselves" [18]. To understand this we must remind ourselves that "... nominalism, the philosophy that asserted that the mind can frame no concept corresponding to any universal or general term - or, in its extreme statement, that only individual examples and no abstract entities exist - ... [was] as yet unformulated, waiting to be proposed in its best and classical form by William of Occam in the fourteenth century" [18]. So, "... to the early denizens of the cloisters ... a letter was just a letter, by God" [18], in opposition to the opinion of the Egyptians as just described (and presumably on the preceding evidence, the pagans themselves), who endowed the characters with an innate power. And thus the power of Runes as "things in themselves" - "things of power" still held. The psychological implications of this nominalism, together with the its complicated extension to entification, nominalisation, reification, and like mental procedures, are to be discussed in detail in later work. However, there is modern upshot to all this speculation, and R I Page, of the British Museum, London, comments that "This belief, that the runes were magical, attracts the fluffy-minded in modern times (just as, incidentally, it appealed to the Teutonic mysticism of some Nazi supporters in the 1930s)" [17]. He goes on to decry the fact that "Our age shows a lamentable tendency to flee from reason, common sense and practicality into the realms of superstition and fantasy, and runes have been taken up into this" [17]. Nevertheless this modern "flight from reason" or "return to fantasy" has a definite psychological reality, as investigated in detail by Jung. And in the context of our discussion here "... it is possible for a modern writer, asserting the value of runes for divination today, to define them as 'a mirror for the magic of our unknown selves' and 'an instrument to tune into our own wisdom'" [17]. And an example of the 21st Century appropriation and reinterpretation of this script is the statement that "In Old Norse

the word Rune (or Runar) means 'magical sign' so not only were they used for recording the spoken word, legends and sagas of the past, they were also thought to have magical powers and were regarded as a powerful tool for divination or 'fortune telling.' Each letter or 'Rune' has a story to tell ... They hold spells and charms ... prayers and wisdom waiting to be awoken from their slumber" [19].

We go further down this path into 21st Century "new age" practice, and consider modern Reiki healing with its "power symbol" Choku Rei, meaning "Place the power of the universe here" [20]. The symbol is constructed from several components: "The horizontal line represents the Reiki source. The vertical line symbolizes the energy flow, and the spiral that touches the middle line seven times represents the seven chakras ... Traditionally Choku Rei is supposed to be drawn anti clockwise (from left to right)" [20]. In terms of its application "The power symbol can be used to increase the power of Reiki. It can also be used for protection. See it as a light switch that has the intention to instantly boost your ability to channel Reiki energy" [20]. In order to make use of it you should "Draw or visualize the symbol in front of you and you will have instant access to more healing energies. Choku Rei also gives the other symbols more power when they are used together" [20]. Thus the power of written symbols - ancient or modern; inscribed or vocalized; known or conjectured; secular or sacred; native or appropriated - has been illustrated.

Now, it has been said that " ... 'the shortest distance between a human being and the truth is a story'. This saying was probably inspired by the teaching methods of [Jesus] the Master of the parable" [21]. We are already aware of Joseph's dream interpretations for Pharaoh (Genesis 41 [22]). So now let us look in depth at a specific example of the power of the written word, in a reading of the story of Belshazzar, King of Babylon's famous feast, as recorded

in Daniel 5 [22]: "{4} They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. {5} Immediately the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lamp stand; and the king saw the hand as it wrote ...". The King was terrified for "God's written word is enough to put the proudest, boldest sinner in a fright. What we see of God, the part of the hand that writes in the book of the creatures, and in the book of the Scriptures, should fill us with awful thoughts concerning that part which we do not see. If this be the finger of God, what is his arm when made bare?" [23]. And so, Belshazzar "{7} ... cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chalde'ans, and the astrologers. The king said to the wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.' {8} Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation ..." [22]. What was more amazing and frightening was that the "Four words in plain tongue, irrelevant in context, graven indelibly in stone in such incongruous manner, stymied everyone - as though superior in intellect ... [Belshazzar's] wisest counselors, too, had had their fill of wine and beer, and they couldn't think to care to answer" [24]. So "Although the words were written very clearly - on white plaster and illumined by a candlestick - nevertheless the king and his men could not read them" [25]. One commentator opines that this is because "It was a spiritual problem. It was not a mental problem. The scholars of Babylon were called in to read the hieroglyphics on the wall. But they could get nowhere. They could not read the words. They could not interpret them. It remained an unsolved puzzle to them because, though seeing, they did not understand. It was not a problem of the eyesight. It was a problem of a darkened heart" [25]. In fact "... no one could as much as read the writing, let alone interpret what it meant! Then the

terrified king called for Daniel ..." [26]. Now Daniel was a "... famous prophet and interpreter of dreams ... Daniel was contacted by angels ... and they provided Daniel with details about the future ... He then reveals the answer, but in the form of a riddle..." [27]. And this is reminiscent of Joseph, who, when asked to interpret, answers "{T16}T 'I cannot do it,' ... 'but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires'" [22]. And thus "By the light of a candlestick, Daniel both decoded and interpreted the writing" [26]. The story continues: "{24} Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. {25} And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN" [22]. Now "Daniel, too, was astonished: He didn't recall ever hearing about this prank being arranged: The words must have been carved and plaster-filled on the brick-stone wall decades previous, and their meaning passed and forgotten: Perhaps [sic] the wall plaster had dried excessively and crazed over the decades of neglect: And perhaps a splash of wine or beer flung in a riotous moment had wetted the wall: loosening the plaster plugs, and exposing their covert phrase" [24]. Despite his surprise he "... recognized the wall builders' construction foreman had carved these as instructions for an accountant-trainee, on that very stone: then filled-in his instructions with the plaster on the wall - they'd have been long-gone before it'd be noticed eventually by a, king-trainee, Belshazzar" [24]. Now in fact, "The accountant-trainee's instructions were, count the money twice, weigh it for total consistency (or record the balance in the books), and pay it out: count, count, weigh, divide - instructions remote from Chaldean upbringing who ate the King's meat, but within Daniel's own learning, as the common abilities of the business-man, although he excelled to science as well" [24]. What was the interpretation of all this? Well, "... we see that Daniel then understood why he'd been brought to Babylon, for here were the very four rivers of the garden of Eden, and their four new names as they were revealed to him for his people: He

felt he was being held very close to God. The four rivers were (become) only two great rivers, since the Pishon (Wadi Batin) was, MENE, gone-dry, a minor tributary; the Gihon (Karun, rud-Khaneh-ye river-bed) was also, MENE, gone-away, lost, a minor tributary; the Hiddekel (Tigris) was, TEKEL, balanced (remaining significant on the book), confluent at the head of the fourth; and the Puratu (Euphrates) had become, PERES (UPHARSIN), divided in branches and lengthwise by large lakes ... Daniel observed, explored, pondered, and spoke and wrote (a little of each) - count, count, weigh, divide" [24]. And herein we recognize that "The order of writing is distance, delay, opacity and ambiguity. And also death - 'dead' meaning, not the living meaning of a present speaker. 'Written words in a state of defenceless misery' have to be 'abandonable to their essential drifting.' So now we begin to understand the paradoxical phonocentric 'history of silence', that repression of writing which can scarcely be acknowledged" [7]. What can we say of the linguistic interpretation of the "writing on the wall"? Well, "As the only authority that we have for the reading is that of Daniel, it seems but fair that the interpretation of the terms be left to the person who gave us the text. According to his interpretation, there is a double sense to be found in the three different words of the inscription (Dan 5:26-28)" [28]. Under this reading we find "Mene, which, however it is pointed, must be taken from the verb menah (Hebrew manah; Babylonian manu), is said to have indicated that God had numbered (the days of) Belshazzar's kingdom and finished it (or delivered it up). Both of these meanings can be shown to be proper to the menah. Teqel, on the contrary, is interpreted as coming from two roots: the first, teqal, 'to weigh,' and the second, qal, 'to be light or wanting' (Hebrew qalal; Babylonian qalalu). Perc (or parcin) also is interpreted as coming from two roots: first, perac, 'to divide' (Hebrew paras or parash; Babylonian parasu), and the second as denoting the proper name Parac, 'Persia'" [28]. And

thus we arrive at Daniel's answer: "{26} This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; {27} TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; {28} PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians'" [22]. Well, with the interpretative feat accomplished we are left to ponder "The first question which presents itself to the critic - namely, why could the inscription be deciphered by Daniel only" [29]. This was tackled by Talmudic scholars, who proposed different theories: "Certain of them concluded that the Hebrew writing had been changed in the time of Ezra, so that even the Jews that were found in the royal court could not read an inscription written in archaic characters. But those who followed R. Simeon in maintaining that the writing had not been changed found other solutions for the problem; e.g., it was written in the cryptographic combination ... each letter of each pair being substituted by its companion ... or the words were written ... one above the other, having to be read vertically; or ... each word backward; or, again ... the first two letters of each word being transposed" [29]. However, the particular theory espoused is of little significance, for "It is evident that the author of the Book of Daniel meant that the inscription was written in characters familiar to the king and the wise men of Babylon, but that, as often happens with ancient inscriptions, the transposition of certain letters baffled every attempt to decipher them" [29]. Now "Thus interpreted, the whole story hangs together, makes good sense, and is fully justified by the context and by the language employed. If the original text was in Babylonian, the signs were ambiguous; if they were in Aramaic, the consonants alone were written, and hence, the reading would be doubtful. In either case, the inscription was apparent but not readable, except by Daniel with the aid of God, through whom also the seer was enabled to give the proper interpretation" [28]. In terms of the authenticity of his answer, the fact "That Daniel's interpretation was accepted by Belshazzar and the rest shows that the

interpretation of the signs was reasonable and convincing when once it had been made. We see, therefore, no good reason for departing from the interpretation that the Book of Daniel gives as the true one" [28]. Nevertheless, the point of the story is that "Daniel saw in this simple phrase, the whole essence of time and space, mathematics and science: We count our steps forward and back; We count our steps even to dance around, left and right - or north-south and east-west; We feel our weight when we stand, jump, climb up and down (or balanced weightless buoyed in bath water or swimming); But we persist (steadfastly, continually) only in the time-forward 'now' dividing the past and the future - time is (also) the divisor for the rates of travel and travail - count, count, weigh, divide" [24].

Moreover, in the story of the Writing on the Wall, we can recover the link between language and our human rationality: "The mathematics student discovers this order repeated at levels in the development of numbers and reciprocal-number-processes: At the primary level, addition and its reciprocal subtraction are counting processes, multiplication scales and leverages weights, and its reciprocal process is division - count, count, weigh, divide; At the intermediate level, addition and multiplication are manipulative counting processes, and functions are tabulated and linearly interpolated (proportioned) - count, count, book, divide; At the graduate level, the two basic arithmetic operations are counting processes, addition and multiplication (the counting of countings); The composition of functions is a (compounding) stacking process; And the derivative slope calculation is a proportioning division process - count, count, balance (compounded), divide" [24]. And so we conclude our story of "... the mysterious riddle written by a hand on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. These Aramaic words may be translated literally as, 'It has been counted and counted, weighed and divided.' Daniel interpreted this to mean that the king's deeds had been

weighed and found deficient and that his kingdom would therefore be divided" [30]. We note here that "As to the interpretation of the inscription, it makes no difference whether the signs represented a mina, a shekel, and two perases, as has been recently suggested by M. Clermont-Ganneau. In this case the meaning was not so apparent, but the puns, the play upon the sounds, were even better" [28]. If we ask "So what about the external supports of language - the marks, the sounds etc. which can be cut off from present intention, can go their own ways separately? To Derrida, these externals are always necessary and always inhabit the internal" [7]. In Derrida's terms, "Unstable interpretations are inevitable because writing tends to a 'zero degree' of sense. ... You can read a text for pleasure and sense ... but you're finally left with a sense of enigma, a final sense which the text doesn't express or refuses to surrender - a sort of unyielding thoughtfulness. It is like the thoughtfulness of a face which tempts one to ask ... 'What are you thinking?' [31]. In interpreting Daniel's interpretation, "Derrida confronts us with a paradox. Repeatability is the risk of language, its ditch and its disablement. It can derail communication. But repeatability is also its condition of possibility. Without it, there could be no recognizable signs. Without the possibility of a quotational version, we can't have the 'true', 'real' one. Communication can be derailed by iterability, and it carries its derailer inside itself" [7]. We might therefore concur with the modern-day meta-interpreter that "In effect, God was making a pun. A deadly serious pun, but still a pun" [32], and that "It is then a typically perverse Joke of the Gods that the passage is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, its meaning inherent in its lack of meaning, a divine prank on a level with some oaf throwing a stick for his dog over the side of a cliff and laughing when the dog runs after it to its doom" [33]. We thus certainly come to overturn the phonocentric view that "Writing is derivative ... It merely represents

speech. It's a poor substitute, a weak extension. It's not essential. Do without it if you can!" [7]. Moreover we see that "'Writing' becomes a palaeonymic: old word, new uses. It no longer designates scripting rather than speaking but rather the undecidable play in both. It inhabits spoken words, inscribed marks ... all other signs" [7].

The next article follows extends these ideas in attempting to ground modern therapeutic wizardry in a historical and cultural context in terms of magical and religious practices, with particular reference to mantra meditation. It makes a link between these ancient "esoteric" ideas and current scientific understandings of brainwave entrainment, and shows how each of these in its own context uses the inherent power of sound and language to create and manipulate psychic experiences ranging from nightmarish visions, to religious ecstasy, to incredible self-awareness, to deeply peaceful, healing coma. We see that whereas the ages-old practices, rooted in mysticism and steeped in tradition, seem to engender "blissful" mental and healthful, healing physical states, caution should be exercised in technologically and unnaturally "forcing" the trance-states, if physical and psychic well-being are to be preserved. It shows how modern hypnotherapy seeks to steer a course between the mystical and the scientific realm, by acknowledging its roots in the former, and properly understanding and utilizing tools from the latter. We emphasize the Lacanian "linguistic" approach to the subconscious, and claim that a subtle combination of hypnosis and the Neuro-linguistic Programming "mantra meta-strategy" [34] of modern communication theory can engender "magical" creativity, change and development - and that it does this so successfully by disrupting the entrainment of brainwaves in deleterious, "ironic" and "self-referential," conscious psycho(a)logical states [5], and allowing them to evolve into dynamic, creative, unconscious patterns.

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